

EYI JANUARY 2006 **TRANSREPORT**

TRANSPORTATION NEWS FROM THE BOSTON REGION METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

New MPO Study Explores Suburban Transit Opportunities

The Boston Region MPO has a new tool with which to explore the feasibility of suburban transit. Commissioned by the MPO in 2004, the recently approved report *Regionwide Suburban Transit Opportunities Study: Phase II* identifies areas where new suburban transit services may be successful. In addition, it recommends alternative strategies for the MPO to consider in the selection of projects for funding under the MPO's ongoing Suburban Mobility Program.

One such strategy is a continued focus on improvements to existing suburban mass transit services, such as increased frequency, longer hours of service, additional weekend service, and routing changes. Another strategy is to implement more demand-responsive services using smaller vehicles that can operate when and where they are called for.

This report builds upon the results of the first phase of this study, which included a review of suburban transit operations in comparable U.S. metropolitan areas, an assessment of existing services in the Boston metropolitan area, and the development of new guidelines for operating successful transit service in Boston's suburbs.

In order to begin to identify areas where new suburban transit services might be successful, the first step in the second phase of the study was to apply screening criteria to all suburban neighborhoods to identify those with the potential to support four different types of suburban service: suburb-suburb commuter trips, "tra-

■ Suburban Transit Study cont. on p. 2

THE BOSTON REGION METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION INVITES YOU TO A TRANSPORTATION OPEN HOUSE

DATE: Tuesday, January 17
MIDDAY SESSION: 12:00 P.M.–2:00 P.M.
EVENING SESSION: 5:00 P.M.–7:00 P.M.
PLACE: MPO Conference Room, Suite 2150
 State Transportation Building
 10 Park Plaza, Boston

PRESENTATION SCHEDULE

Preservation and Modernization: *How do the MPO and MBTA distribute funds on an annual basis?*

| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| 12:00 P.M. and 5:00 P.M. | Welcome and Introduction |
| 12:10 P.M. and 5:10 P.M. | Transportation Improvement Program <i>Sean Daly, CTPS</i> |
| 12:25 P.M. and 5:25 P.M. | MBTA Capital Investment Program <i>Steve Woelfel, MBTA</i> |

Mobility in the Region: *How does the MPO monitor, study, and fund projects to improve mobility in the region?*

| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| 12:40 P.M. and 5:40 P.M. | Mobility Management System Program <i>Lourenço Dantas, CTPS</i> |
| 1:00 P.M. and 6:00 P.M. | Suburban Transit Opportunities <i>Clinton Bench, CTPS</i> |
| 1:20 P.M. and 6:20 P.M. | Recent Studies Examining Mobility <i>Efi Pagitsas, CTPS</i> |
| 1:40 P.M. and 6:40 P.M. | Unified Planning Work Program Studies <i>Mary Ellen Sullivan, CTPS</i> |

Comment Period for Transit Regulation Amendment Extended

The Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has extended the public comment period on the proposed amendments to 310 CMR 7.36: Transit System Improvements that were requested by the Executive Office of Transportation. The public comment period, which was to have closed on January 3, has been extended to January 17.

■ Transit Regulation cont. on p. 3



See inside for special insert.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

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TRANSPORTATION PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE ACTION ITEMS

The development of JOURNEY TO 2030, the Boston Region MPO's transportation plan, continues to be a top priority for the Transportation Planning and Programming

Committee. In addition to hosting another MPO Open House on Plan topics (see the notice on page 1), the Committee will further refine Plan policies in January and begin developing the universe of projects that will be included in the document.

In December the Committee gave the go-ahead for the Central Transportation Planning Staff to begin the Buzzards Bay Commuter Rail Extension Feasibility Study. In this work program, CTPS will estimate the potential demand, revenue, operating costs, capital costs, and environmental impacts of restored commuter rail service between Boston and Buzzards Bay. The staff will also identify operational constraints and provide a basic overview of necessary capital improvements.

The Committee also approved the report *Regionwide Suburban Transit Opportunities Study: Phase II*. See the related article on page 1.

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COUNCIL UPDATE

At the December meeting, the Advisory Council was briefed on MassHighway's draft *Project Development and Design Guide*. Conducting the briefing were Beth Larkin of HNTB and chair of the Massachusetts State Highway Design Manual Task Force, Chris Conklin of VHB, and Barbara Lucas of the Metropolitan Area Planning Council and vice chair of the MPO's Transportation Planning and Programming Committee. For more information about the new guidebook, go to www.vhb.com/mhdGuide/mhd_GuideBook.asp.

On January 11, the Advisory Council is tentatively scheduled to have a dialogue with Michael A. Chong, the new Planning and Environmental Program Manager of the Federal Highway Administration's Massachusetts Division. Please note that the meeting will be held at the Volpe Center, in Cambridge, rather than the State Transportation Building, its usual venue. See page 4 for details.

Also on January 11, the Advisory Council's Freight Committee and Transportation Plan Committee will meet at the State Transportation Building. See page 4 for details.

■ *Suburban Transit Study cont. from p. 1*
ditional" suburb-Boston trips, "reverse commute" trips from Boston to suburban employment centers, and suburb-suburb noncommuting trips.

In the second step, the neighborhoods that passed the initial screening were reviewed to determine if they were served by existing transit routes. Those with no transit service other than rail stations were forwarded to the third step for further analysis. Some neighborhoods with existing bus service were also forwarded if that service was very infrequent or beyond convenient access distance from many of the primary destinations of the neighborhood's residents.

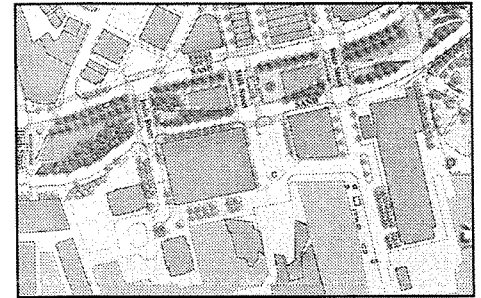
In the third step, neighborhoods were examined in more detail. MPO staff identified concentrations of residences or employment locations, and reviewed the existing road systems and the presence of commuter rail or rapid transit stations. Some neighborhoods that had initially appeared to have a good potential to support transit service were found to have their residential population and employers too dispersed to allow for efficient fixed-route, scheduled transit operation. Seven neighborhoods emerged as a result of this process.

In the final step, suggestions were developed for specific mass transit routes to serve the seven neighborhoods identified

■ *Suburban Transit Study cont. on p. 3*

Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy Greenway Making Strides

A windfall of pledges totaling \$6.3 million in the past year has marked a very successful start of the fund-raising campaign for an endowment fund for the future care of the Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy Greenway.



A rendering of the future Greenway

The Greenway Conservancy, a non-profit organization established in July 2004, exceeded its goal of raising \$5 million this year, a promising milestone in the Conservancy's efforts to meet its long-term goal of raising \$50 million to support the Greenway in the future. Meeting the \$5 million mark will bring in a \$5 million matching donation from the Massachusetts Turnpike Authority, the agency that manages the development and construction of the Greenway.

Significant pledges to the Greenway endowment came from many large corporations, including Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Massachusetts, Raytheon Co., State Street Corp., Boston 2004, and Bank of America. In addition, the family of Senator Edward Kennedy pledged \$1 million, in honor of the Senator's mother, for whom the Greenway is named.

Another promising development for the Greenway is that a compromise has been reached on the design of the sidewalk in front of the InterContinental Boston Hotel, which is currently under construction on Atlantic Avenue, adjacent to the site of the future Greenway. The compromise results in two drop-off lanes for the hotel and a straight sidewalk in front of the hotel. The decision will result in revised guidelines for the City of Boston's approval process for projects along the future Greenway.

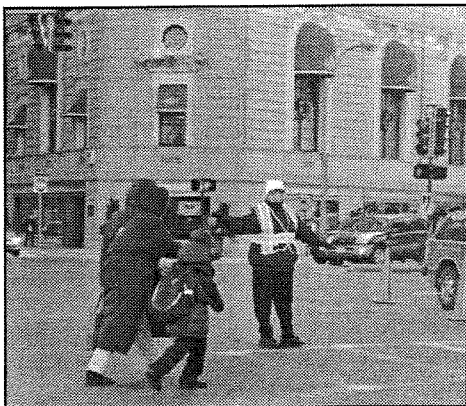
"Safe Routes to School" Program Gets Underway

An international movement to increase the number of children walking and/or bicycling to school has spread to the United States and is now getting underway in Massachusetts. Safe Routes to School (SR2S) is a new federal program included in the recently passed Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU). It provides federal funding to states for administering SR2S programs at the local level. The program's goals are to:

- Enable and encourage children, including those with disabilities, to walk, bicycle, or wheel to school
- Make bicycling and walking to school safer and more appealing, thereby encouraging a healthy and active lifestyle from an early age
- Facilitate the planning, development, and implementation of projects and activities that will improve safety and reduce traffic, fuel consumption, and air pollution in the vicinity (within approximately two miles) of primary and middle schools (grades K-8)

Under the guidelines for the program, each state administers its own program and develops its own procedures to solicit and select projects for funding. States may use this funding for infrastructure-related and non-infrastructure-related projects. Infrastructure-related projects include sidewalks, traffic calming structures, and bicycle facilities. Non-infra-

■ Safe Routes to School *cont. on p. 4*



Renaissance School crossing at Arlington Street in Boston

■ Transit Regulation *cont. from p. 1*

The proposed changes include substitutions for the three remaining transit projects that were required as air quality mitigation measures for the Central Artery/Third Harbor Tunnel project, as well as modifications to the regulatory procedures for delaying and substituting transit projects.

Two public hearings on the proposed amendment were scheduled for December 21, as *TRANSREPORT* went to press. Copies of the regulation and background documents are available for inspection during normal business hours at the Department of Environmental Protection, One Winter Street, Boston, MA. In addition, these documents are available on DEP's Web site at www.mass.gov/dep/air/laws/regulati.htm#proposed and www.mass.gov/dep/public/publiche.htm.

■ Suburban Transit Study *cont. from p. 2*
in the previous step. These locations are in Wellesley, Winchester, Westwood, Canton, Salem, Waltham, and Peabody. Although these were the highest-ranked locations in the analysis, none appeared to have the amount of demand that would support routes with full-size transit buses. Consequently, services using smaller vehicles would be more desirable and better able to target niche markets.

Winter Service Enhancements Added to Hingham Commuter Boat Service

With the recent addition of the *Salacia*, a 600-passenger, high-speed catamaran, to its Hingham winter fleet, the MBTA has made year-round water transportation a more viable option for South Shore commuters. Of the *Salacia*'s 600 seats, 425 are in its heated, indoor area. The larger-capacity vessel replaces a 350-passenger commuter boat owned by Boston Harbor Cruises. Because of the *Salacia*'s increased capacity, Boston Harbor Cruises is also planning to construct a new gangway at Rows Wharf to minimize boarding and alighting times.

Service between Hingham and Boston's Rows Wharf includes 18 round-trips per

MBTA to Purchase 155 New Buses

The MBTA Board of Directors unanimously approved, in December, the purchase of 155 new, environmentally friendly, low-floor buses equipped with automated stop announcement systems. The procurement is part of a \$400 million plan to upgrade and modernize service on the MBTA's 170 bus routes. It will bring the total number of new buses purchased in the last three years to 768. During this same period, the average age of a bus dropped from 14 years to 5 years.

Manufactured with emissions-control, diesel technology and powered by ultra-low-sulfur diesel fuel, the 155 buses will allow the MBTA to significantly reduce the levels of emissions from engine exhaust.

Under the \$52.8 million contract, the new 40-foot buses will be built by New Flyer of America Inc., of St. Cloud, Minnesota. Delivery is expected to begin next fall and be completed by May 2007.

For more information about *Regionwide Suburban Transit Opportunities Study: Phase II*, contact Clinton Bench at cbench@ctps.org.

day. It begins at 6:00 A.M. and ends with an evening departure from Boston at 8:30 P.M. Departure and arrival times did not change with the addition of the *Salacia*. Information about the schedule of specific vessels will soon be available on the vessels, at ticket offices, and on the MBTA's Web site, www.mbta.com.

In May, the *Salacia* will return to her summertime route as the Provincetown Fast Ferry, and the 350-passenger commuter boat that it has replaced will return to service. For more information on the MBTA's commuter boat service, visit www.mbta.com.

JOURNEY TO 2030

Transportation Plan of the
Boston Region Metropolitan
Planning Organization

IN THIS EDITION

Mobility Strategies
Monitoring and Studying Mobility
Preservation and Modernization
Share Your Ideas

MOBILITY IN THE REGION

Mobility means having safe, reliable, and convenient transportation options available from which you can choose the services that best fit your needs. The programs of the Boston Region MPO foster projects that improve connectivity and access, and expand transportation options.

MPO OPEN HOUSE

JANUARY 17, 2006

TWO SESSIONS

12:00–2:00 PM and 5:00–7:00 PM

MPO Conference Room, Suite 2150
State Transportation Building
10 Park Plaza, Boston

**PRESERVATION AND MODERNIZATION: HOW DO THE MPO AND MBTA
DISTRIBUTE FUNDS ON AN ANNUAL BASIS?**

- Transportation Improvement Program
- MBTA Capital Investment Program

**MOBILITY IN THE REGION: HOW DOES
THE MPO MONITOR AND STUDY MOBILITY
IN THE REGION, AND FUND PROJECTS TO
IMPROVE IT?**

- Mobility Management System Program
- Suburban Transit Opportunities
- Other Studies Examining Mobility
- Unified Planning Work Program

WHAT STRATEGIES DOES THE MPO USE TO IMPROVE MOBILITY?

Providing mobility in the Boston region requires a comprehensive, multimodal program of strategies and investments. The Metropolitan Planning Organization is developing a 25-year Transportation Plan for the region, JOURNEY TO 2030, which will include:

REGIONALLY SIGNIFICANT TRANSPORTATION PROJECTS

A set of regionally significant highway and transit improvements will be selected that respond to the demographic, development, and travel pattern changes forecast to take place during the next 25 years. Examples include adding a highway travel lane, building a highway interchange, extending a commuter rail or transit line, or procuring additional public transportation vehicles.

OPERATIONAL STRATEGIES

Improvements that maximize the capacity of existing infrastructure, operational strategies include traffic signal coordination, giving transit vehicles priority at intersections, intersection redesign, access management, and intelligent transportation systems (see page 3).

TRAVEL DEMAND MANAGEMENT

Travel demand management measures, such as vanpools, ridesharing, flexible work schedules, and high-occupancy-vehicle lanes, improve mobility for certain traveler markets and help reduce overall vehicle-miles traveled.

SAFETY IMPROVEMENTS

Addressing safety issues is a policy goal of the MPO. Improvements such as modification of facilities in order to reduce vehicle conflicts and better management of incidents (crashes, etc.) have beneficial effects not only on safety but on mobility as well.

LAND USE AND GROWTH MANAGEMENT

Every land-use development decision or transportation infrastructure decision affects both urban form and transportation use. Smart growth strategies that coordinate development with existing and future transportation investments can increase transportation choices while using resources in an efficient and sustainable manner.



WHAT MPO PROGRAMS ADDRESS MOBILITY IN THE REGION?

MOBILITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Monitoring the Transportation System

A key activity of the MPO is the Mobility Management System program, which monitors the performance of the region's transportation system. Extensive data are collected on an ongoing basis and are analyzed using mobility performance measures to identify the facilities and services in greatest need of improvement.

Roadway Monitoring

Travel time information is collected on 1,277 centerline-miles of major arterials and limited-access highways. Roadway performance is measured in terms of travel speeds and delays, which are complemented by additional measures, such as average daily traffic and crashes.

Transit Monitoring

MPO staff perform ongoing monitoring of MBTA services, including direct observation of schedule adherence and passenger loads. These data are fed into the biennial MBTA service-planning process and are also used in corridor and subarea public transportation studies.

Monitoring Other Transportation Systems

- Periodic surveys are conducted at park-and-ride lots at transit stations. Performance is measured in terms of capacity, use, and the time of day at which lots fill up.
- On a quarterly basis, travel time runs are conducted on the I-93 high-occupancy-vehicle (HOV) lanes. Periodically, occupancy counts are also taken. Performance is measured in terms of the travel time saved compared to general-purpose-lane travel.
- The Mobility Management System also investigates ways to enhance transportation-demand-management activities and improve bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

UNIFIED PLANNING WORK PROGRAM

Studying the Transportation System

The annual Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) is another important tool that the MPO utilizes to understand and improve mobility in the region. The UPWP describes all of the transportation-planning studies undertaken in the region and includes detailed budget information. Ideas for planning studies frequently come from the MPO's monitoring activities and public-outreach efforts.

Many of the Mobility Management System recommendations have resulted in UPWP studies, such as:

- Transportation Improvement Study for Routes 1A, 114, and 107, and Other Major Roadways in Downtown Salem
- South Shore Subregional Area Study
- Route 2/Alewife Brook Parkway Traffic Study

In addition, the MPO seeks input through its public workshops, its municipal seminars, and outreach to the Metropolitan Area Planning Council's subregional groups. Examples of mobility studies resulting from these outreach mechanisms are:

- Belmont/Lexington/Waltham Study
- Regionwide Suburban Mobility Study, Phases I and II
- I-495 Circumferential Transit Study

SUBURBAN MOBILITY

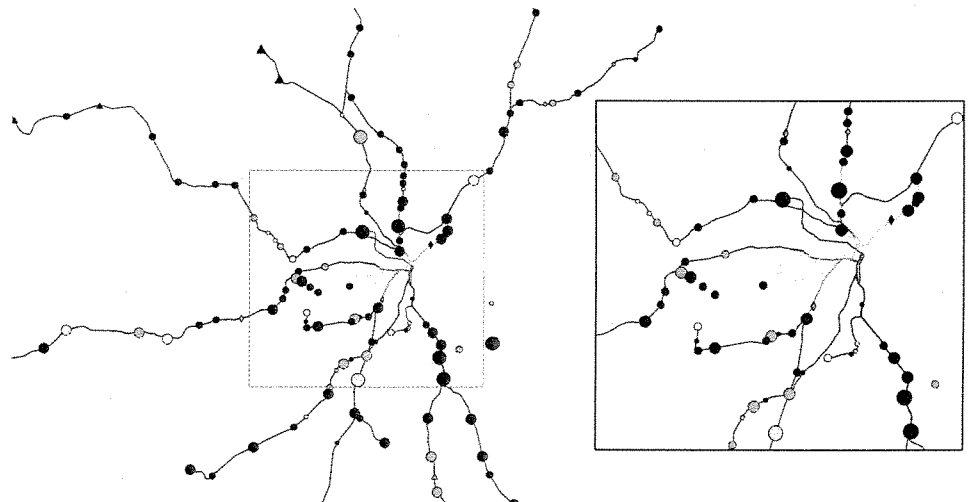
Providing New Options for Transportation

The Boston Region MPO's Suburban Mobility Program provides funding that is used for bus and van services in areas currently not served or underserved by public transportation. Particular consideration is given to services that connect to commuter rail or bus stations, increase access to employment, or improve mobility for suburban residents dependent on public transportation.

Eligible applicants include local and regional public entities, recognized Transportation Management Associations serving the region, and other approved non-profit entities capable of implementing such projects.

This program has provided funds for:

- Cape Ann Transportation Authority, for a summer shuttle service in Essex and Ipswich
- 128 Business Council, to operate a shuttle service between the Anderson Regional Transportation Center and businesses and multi-unit housing in Woburn, Burlington, and Lexington
- Town of Framingham, to operate the LIFT 9 service
- Worcester Regional Transit Authority, to operate a rider-request, zone-oriented service to locations in Marlborough and Southborough



PRESERVATION AND MODERNIZATION

The MPO places a high priority on the preservation and modernization of the existing transportation system, because to do so is:

SOUND MANAGEMENT

Past investment in transportation facilities in the Boston region resulted in a system that people and businesses rely on every day. It must be kept in a state of good repair.

COST-EFFECTIVE

Investing in existing transportation assets makes the most of the infrastructure in place now so that mobility and access can be maintained.

SMART GROWTH

Concentrating development where existing transportation facilities can provide access promotes a more sustainable development pattern.

HOW DOES THE MPO DISTRIBUTE FUNDS EACH YEAR?

TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

The Boston Region MPO's Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is a five-year intermodal program of federally funded transportation improvements. The TIP implements the priorities of the region's current Transportation Plan—and will implement those of the JOURNEY TO 2030 Transportation Plan—by giving priority to projects that reflect the policies of the MPO.

The majority of the spending in the TIP is for the preservation and modernization of the existing transportation system. Types of projects in the TIP include replacement and rehabilitation of bridges, reconstruction of roadways, interstate highway maintenance, and transit capital improvement projects.

INTELLIGENT TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS

MAXIMIZING THE BENEFIT OF FACILITIES THROUGH TECHNOLOGY

Intelligent transportation systems (ITS) encompass a broad range of communications-based information and technologies. By modernizing transportation system elements with ITS, the MPO can improve operating efficiency without the physical expansion of facilities. Some examples of ITS are:

- Real-time travel information that improves travelers' decisions
- System monitoring that improves response to incidents
- Electronic payment of tolls and automated public transportation fare payment, which reduce delays

REGIONAL ITS ARCHITECTURE FOR METROPOLITAN BOSTON

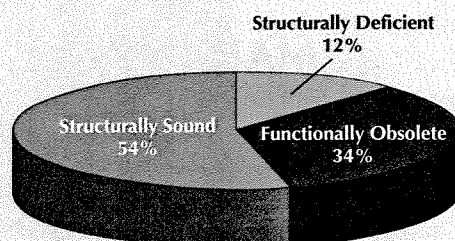
In order to provide a framework for the deployment of ITS in the Boston region, a regional architecture was developed that defines the pieces of the system and the information to be exchanged among them. Program areas and initiatives include:

- Archived Data Management
- Commercial Vehicle Operations
- Electronic Fare Payment
- Emergency Management
- Interagency Communications and Information Sharing
- Maintenance and Construction Management
- Parking Management
- Traffic Management
- Transit Management
- Traveler Information

THE BOSTON REGION MPO BRIDGE PROGRAM

MassHighway inventories bridge structural data for 1,431 MassHighway and municipally owned bridges in the Boston region. Using a bridge management system to prioritize repairs to bridges, MassHighway works with the MPO to fund projects that meet the region's most urgent bridge needs.

Condition of Bridges in the Boston Region



The current TIP includes nearly \$200 million in bridge repair investments to be implemented over three years.

JOURNEY TO
2030

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

What investment choices should the MPO make in order to improve the transportation system?

KEEP UP-TO-DATE

- ☐ YES! I would like to receive additional information about events, documents, or meetings related to the Transportation Plan. *(Please provide contact information below.)*
- ☐ YES! I am interested in inviting the MPO to learn about my organization's transportation needs and views. *(Please provide contact information below.)*

Name

Address

City State Zip code

(Please provide your e-mail address if you would prefer to receive information electronically.)

E-mail address



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CENTRAL TRANSPORTATION PLANNING STAFF

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MEETING CALENDAR

The public is welcome to attend the following transportation-related meetings. A photo ID is usually required for access to meeting sites.

AT THE STATE TRANSPORTATION BUILDING, 10 PARK PLAZA, BOSTON

Thursday, January 5
Boston Region MPO
Transportation Planning and
Programming Committee 10:00 A.M.

MPO Conference Room
Suite 2150

Wednesday, January 11
Regional Transportation
Advisory Council Freight
Committee 1:00 P.M.

MPO Conference Room
Suite 2150

Regional Transportation
Advisory Council Transportation
Plan Committee 2:00 P.M.

MPO Conference Room
Suite 2150

Tuesday, January 17
Boston Region MPO Open
House (see page 1 for event
schedule) 12:00 P.M.
and
5:00 P.M.

MPO Conference Room
Suite 2150

Wednesday, January 18
Advisory Committee
to the MBTA 1:00 P.M.

Conference Room 2

Thursday, January 19
Boston Region MPO
Unified Planning Work
Program Committee 9:00 A.M.

MPO Conference Room
Suite 2150

Boston Region MPO
Transportation Planning and
Programming Committee 10:00 A.M.

MPO Conference Room
Suite 2150

Monday, January 30
MBTA Rider Oversight
Committee 4:15 P.M.

Conference Rooms 1, 2, and 3

Thursday, February 2
Boston Region MPO
Transportation Planning and
Programming Committee 10:00 A.M.

MPO Conference Room
Suite 2150

Call (617) 222-5179 for date
MBTA Board of Directors 1:00 P.M.

Conference Rooms 2 and 3

AT OTHER BOSTON AREA LOCATIONS

Wednesday, January 11
Regional Transportation
Advisory Council 3:00 P.M.

U.S. Department of Transportation
Volpe Center, Conference Room 1-20
55 Broadway, Cambridge

Tuesday, January 17
Charles River Basin Citizens
Advisory Committee 4:00 P.M.

For location information, contact
Charlotte Fleetwood at (617) 951-6440
or at cxfleetw@bigdig.com.

Friday, January 20
Move Massachusetts 8:10 A.M.

Brown Rudnick Berlack Israels
One Financial Center, 18th Floor
Dewey Square, Boston

To RSVP, e-mail danwilson@verizon.net.

Meeting dates and times are subject to change: please
call (617) 973-7119 for confirmation. Additional
transportation meetings open to the public are listed
on the Boston Region MPO Web site, www.bostonmpo.org.

■ Safe Routes to School cont. from p. 3

structure-related projects include public awareness campaigns, education, enforcement, and training of volunteers and program managers.

Each state will also have a full-time SR2S coordinator, who will work directly with local communities. To learn more about the SR2S program in Massachusetts, call Davida Eisenberg, the state's school outreach coordinator, at (888) 4COMMUTE (MassRIDES), or send an e-mail to davida.eisenberg@state.ma.us.

TRANSREPORT

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